

meeting with the Cuban government on bilateral issues like fighting drugs and smuggling—the margin is more than 61 percent.

Challenging conventional wisdom that Floridians—and especially the state's large Cuban-American population—are in lockstep with the embargo, the poll finds stronger support for normalization in Florida (63 percent) than in the country overall (56 percent). A full 67 percent of Floridians support removing all restrictions for Americans to travel to Cuba, and 82 percent favor meetings with the Cuban government on issues of mutual concern.

Simply put: The state that reportedly once had the greatest reluctance to re-engage has reversed its position.

Having jailed political opponents, Cuba has a political climate that is far from free. The Cuban government continues to hold former USAID subcontractor Alan Gross in prison. The Cuban government has inched toward loosening its grip on the island's economy. Despite that, however, the Cuban people continue to live under a repressive regime.

However, it would appear that a standard of 100 percent political alignment with the United States before allowing freedom of travel or economic activity with another country is only applied to Cuba. For instance, U.S.-China trade topped \$500 billion in 2011, and we granted permanent normalized trade relations to Russia in 2012. American tourists visit both countries without restriction. It is easy to see why most Americans now oppose our frozen-in-time policies toward Cuba.

Trade with Latin America is the fastest growing part of our international commerce. In 2014, economic growth in Latin America is expected to continue to outpace U.S. growth. Rather than isolate Cuba with outdated policies, we have isolated ourselves.

For example, the presidents of our Latin American partners, including close allies such as Colombia and Mexico, recently traveled to Cuba alongside the U.N. secretary general. In January, Brazil joined Cuba in inaugurating a huge new shipping terminal on the island. And our European and Canadian friends engage with Cuba. Meanwhile, U.S. companies are prohibited from any economic activity on the island.

Just about the only beneficiary of our embargo has been Cuba's current regime. The embargo actually has helped the Castros maintain their grip on power by providing a reliable and convenient scapegoat for Cuba's failing economy. Change will come to Cuba. These counterproductive U.S. policies have delayed it.

President Obama has already relaxed some facets of our Cuba policy, lifting restrictions on Cuban-American travel and remittances, which have had positive effects. Anecdotally, U.S. remittances have been crucial in allowing Cuban entrepreneurs to take full advantage of economic openings that the Castro regime has been forced to allow. This not only improves Cubans' lives but will make future economic contractions by the Cuban government difficult for the regime to attempt. Current policy boxes U.S. entrepreneurs and companies out of taking part in any of this burgeoning Cuban private sector.

Further, there is simply no legitimate justification for restricting any American travel to Cuba. The travel ban, like the rest of the embargo, only bolsters the Cuban government's control over information and civil society. Instead of willingly restricting the liberty of our own citizens, we should be taking every opportunity to flood Cubans with American interaction, with our ideas, with our young people.

Americans want a change in our Cuba policy. The president should heed the majority of those across the country who recognize

that we have much to gain by jettisoning this Cold War relic.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

LITTLE COUNTRY THEATRE

• Ms. HEITKAMP. Madam President, I am pleased to honor and recognize the Little Country Theatre at North Dakota State University as it celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Founded in 1914 by a small group of drama students, the Little Country Theatre has inspired, challenged, and educated countless students, faculty, and community members across North Dakota. Today, the Little Country Theatre is well recognized and respected for its diverse programming and for bringing the gift of theater to the public.

Over the last 100 years, the Little Country Theatre has presented hundreds of plays throughout North Dakota. It is celebrating its 100th season with several special events, including the screening of a documentary on the rich history of the theater, its faculty, its leaders and its impact on the community. In addition, the group will be performing classic stories such as *Oklahoma* and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and hosting many thought-provoking discussions.

The Little Country Theatre is a fixture on the North Dakota State University campus and serves as an important hub for current students by helping them understand the great value of theater and performance art. But its impact can be felt well beyond the stage and campus. It has spread the joy of the theater to rural communities across the State, while inspiring the next generation of actors and actresses. I am proud to acknowledge and honor this significant milestone for the Little Country Theatre.

I ask the Senate to join me in congratulating the Little Country Theatre on its first 100 years and in wishing continued success in the future.●

SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA MOBILE HEALTH CLINIC

• Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, today I wish to celebrate an exciting and significant victory for local veterans in southern West Virginia and to recognize the unwavering dedication of the people who have worked tirelessly to bring the first-ever mobile veterans health clinic to Mercer County.

Today, the Beckley VA Medical Center will debut the long-awaited mobile health clinic in Bluefield, WV. This facility will improve access to primary and mental health-care to the growing number of veterans in the region.

This is wonderful news for our brave heroes who have been without accessible health care for far too long. Until now, our veterans' only option for receiving health care has been to drive over an hour to the closest clinic or

hospital. Expecting our veterans to commute this far after these courageous men and women have already risked their lives in the defense of this country is simply unacceptable.

I have always said that West Virginia is one of the most patriotic states in this great Nation, and we are so proud of the number of veterans and Active-Duty members who have served with honor and distinction. Upon returning home, they truly deserve the absolute best care and treatment that is available. That is why we have made it our top priority to bring this clinic to serve the veterans in Mercer County and the surrounding communities with quality care.

The mobile health clinic will be an extension of the Beckley VA Medical Center, and it will be initially stationed in Bluefield, WV. As long it is utilized by area veterans, we can count on this facility to stay in southern West Virginia for years to come.

I especially want to emphasize the efforts of one very special West Virginian who has dedicated the past 18 years to helping the veterans of southern West Virginia—Al Hancock. His leadership and commitment to the betterment of the veteran community is truly why this mobile clinic will open its doors today.

Throughout his life and still today, Al has answered the call of service—whether it was serving our great Nation or helping the people of West Virginia. He is a retired teacher and a retired Air Force veteran who served two tours in Vietnam.

A proud and passionate leader, he was the chairman of the retired military support group and he led discussions among over 250 veterans about the issues concerning them most. He talked with fellow veterans, their spouses, and their families regularly.

One issue that continued to arise was the need for more accessible health care. After more than 150 letters sent to the local newspaper and issuing a petition containing more than 3,000 resident signatures, he provided a voice to the veteran community. Despite the many obstacles and hurdles, Al never gave up—he worked passionately and tirelessly to bring this issue to light. And finally, that voice resonated loud and clear. Because of Al's perseverance and determined vision, I am proud to have worked closely with Al to help bring people together to make his vision a reality.

With the hard work and partnership of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Beckley VA, and the West Virginia delegation, we have been able to make a difference for Al and for all of the veterans who reside throughout southern West Virginia.

We owe our veterans more than a debt of gratitude. Showing our appreciation to the brave men and women who have served is something we should do each and every day. By delivering this mobile health clinic, we are